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ENSURING DIVERSITY IS NOT JUST  
ANOTHER BUZZ WORD

by

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## *Preface*

In today's environment of cutbacks and downsizing the military needs to take full advantage of the assets it has in place. The topic of Managing Diversity first appealed to me when I was the Deputy Director of the Business Office at the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC). We would build teams to conduct Business Case Analyses (BCA) to determine ways to consolidate like-business functions at separate commands. The creativity generated by those teams was just amazing and I can remember noticing how the teams had representation, not by design, from most minority groups. I noticed that there is power in group dynamics created by people from different backgrounds.

I would like to thank Lieutenant Colonel Allison Palmer, my faculty advisor for her support and guidance throughout this effort. Additionally, I would like to thank the staff at the Air University Library for their help in my research and for the use of their facility. Finally, I need to thank the men and women of the Armed Forces who acted as an inspiration for my effort.

### ***Abstract***

This paper addresses the need to embrace the diversity of the men and women of the Armed Forces. Over the last two decades the military has evolved from an organization of predominately single white (males many of which not having a high school diploma) to an ethnically and multiculturally diverse organization of men and women. Because of this transformation, the leaders of the Armed Forces must learn to manage that diversity and take advantage of its benefits.

Embracing diversity as an asset provides a myriad of advantages. Among them are 1) full utilization of human capital; 2) reduced interpersonal conflict; 3) greater innovation and flexibility; 4) improved productivity; 5) reduced employee turnover; and 6) improved recruiting opportunities. There are, however, difficulties involved in managing diversity. The United States Armed Forces have not yet created a culture that is able to take full advantage of diversity. There is no tried and true method of changing organizational culture; suffice it to say that it is a difficult and time-consuming process that may take years to accomplish. Many people in this society look at workforce diversity as another Affirmative Action program. It is important that sailors, soldiers and airmen understand that workforce diversity is not a quota system but rather a way of achieving synergy within an organization.

The only way to achieve the synergistic effects of diversity is through commitment and education. Top-down commitment to reinforcing the value of diversity through education in boot camp and continued at least once per year throughout a career will provide the military with



innovative men and women eager to help solve the complex problems facing the forces in the next millenium.

## Part 1

### Introduction

*To prosper in the future, we must value, understand, and better utilize diversity in our business, education, government, as well as in society in general. In other words, we must learn to manage employee diversity as a vital resource.*

— Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener

Twenty years ago, when our fathers led the military, there was less of a need to understand or care about effective ways of dealing with diversity. There was a prototype sailor, soldier, or airmen who was young, single, white, and male without a high school diploma. Due to the cookie cutter makeup of the military member, his military was not as concerned with issues like sexual harassment, equal opportunity, family problems, and cultural sensitivity.

Those days are gone forever; the military of today is a whole new breed. Part Two of this paper will show that the sailor, soldier, or airmen of the new millenium is an older, married, more educated, and culturally diverse man or woman. This evolution of the new prototype military person has demanded that today's leadership recognize that those men and women under their charge are different and individual; that they will respond to similar situations in different ways; and that they offer a myriad of valuable assets and ideas.

It is absolutely imperative that today's military leaders ensure that "diversity" does not go the way of past military programs such as the Navy's "Total Quality Leadership" and become another buzzword. The benefits of properly managing cultural diversity are real and evident in the civilian business world. The Department of Defense (DoD) can reap the same benefits reaped

by our civilian business counterparts. There is no patent or textbook answer on how to properly manage diversity, however there are numerous examples of what some civilian companies have done in taking advantage of different ideas and assets that people of various cultures bring to the table. Companies that have managed diversity well have experienced lower turnover, greater innovation and improved productivity.<sup>1</sup>

The author's research emphasizes the need for understanding and benefiting from diversity in today's military. Part 2 of this paper provides a definition of cultural diversity as well as some background, evolution and significance of a diverse workforce. The second part of this paper also includes a detailed comparison of today's military with that of a generation ago. In Part 3 the benefits of diversity in the workforce will be addressed. The author will highlight those benefits and translate them into how the military can benefit from diversity. In an effort to tell both sides of the story Part 4 will include some of the pitfalls or difficulties of a diverse workforce. The author discusses cultural change, management difficulties, and making sure the "diversity thing" is not Affirmative Action. Finally, Part 5 is dedicated to recommendations regarding the need for further diversity and ideas for managing a diverse workforce.

Managing cultural diversity is a major challenge facing the military. The United States Office of Personnel Management, in its *Managing Diversity* participant workbook, refers to this as "The Challenge:"

Without question, diversity is the hardest and most challenging work you will encounter. Valuing and managing diversity touches people's emotions, values, and beliefs. It asks people to question and make changes in their behavior. It asks organizations to change policies, systems, and practices-many of which no one questioned for years-and many of which have contributed not only to organization's traditions and values, but also to its success.

The resistance to change in diversity interventions is significant. Employees who have been oppressed for years are no longer patient. Some people who have been in power for years are afraid to share that power. All of these issues make this work different from most training and organizational development work. The

interventions are not the same as general supervisory skills, total quality management training, production controls, or performance management. Diversity impacts everything the organization and the people in the organization do. Managing diversity is not easy. This work is not for those looking for the “quick fix.”<sup>2</sup>

There are many obstacles to creating a culture that values diversity and the benefit it offers, from the basic fear of change to a fear of sharing the tightly held power that leadership provides. Properly managing diversity will not be easy and will not be accomplished overnight. It will take a long time to change the policies, systems and practices that have been in place for years, not to mention, the effort necessary to destroy the cultural biases that our troops bring with them upon entry into the service.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Loden and Judy B Rosener. *Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource*, (Homewood: Business One Irwin, 1991), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Michael E. Phelps, *Understanding and Managing Diversity: The Personnel Challenge for Leadership*, ACSC Research, March 1997, 2.

## **Part 2**

### **Diversity: Definition and Evolution**

*The world in which we live is far too competitive to pass up available resources. You'll not win races for long, firing only half of the cylinders in your engine.... In my opinion, the only way to be competitive is to use all of the talent you can muster, no matter how it is packaged.*

— Jack MacAllister, Chairman of US West

When the leader of an organization tells his managers to “do diversity” what is he or she asking for and what exactly is diversity or better stated cultural diversity? Cultural diversity refers to the differences in age, ethnic heritage, gender, national origin, marital status, physical ability/qualities, race, religion, economic status, education, and sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup>

The workforce of today is no longer willing to check their personal and cultural identities at the office door in order to fit the organization’s “cookie cutter” employee. Today’s worker wants to maintain his or her own ethnic and cultural uniqueness and to be an individual within the group. They are asking to be respected for the value they bring as a diverse people to an organization.<sup>2</sup>

### **Background**

When did this focus on a diverse workforce begin? Perhaps the change in the make-up of the workforce began in earnest following World War II. Domestic and sociological changes brought about by the war opened up new occupational avenues for women and minorities,

particularly African Americans. During WWII President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 directing the federal government and defense contractors to be non-discriminatory employers. President Truman desegregated the military and the returning black war veterans became less obliging to endure workforce discrimination as were black civilians and women who experienced wartime employment.<sup>3</sup> These were the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sex, race, national origin, or religion. The Act created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to investigate charges of discrimination. In 1970, the agency won a landmark lawsuit against AT&T and imposed a strict system of hiring and promotion quotas on the company. The private and public business sector took notice.<sup>4</sup> Affirmative Action programs in the late 1960s were imposed on government contractors to overcome the effects of past discrimination. It resulted in timetables for compliance with set standards to ensure certain groups were not “underutilized”: blacks, women, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1970s major corporations and government agencies and universities embraced these programs. These changing workforce demographics were beginning to dismantle the white male workplace “monoculturalism.” During this time the hiring of women and minorities was not enough. Stephen Lynch, author of *The Diversity Machine*, felt that even then the differences in cultural identities needed to be productively valued and managed to gain a competitive advantage in the ever-increasing multicultural global markets.<sup>6</sup> Essentially, organizations were saying, “...we now have a multicultural workforce, so let’s take advantage of this asset.”<sup>7</sup>

From difference comes an opportunity for advantage. By the 1990s a new field in the business world was being created, the field of diversity management was establishing itself as the business branch of multiculturalism.<sup>8</sup>

The new “diversity consultants” proclaimed that the days of the “one size fits all” employee was gone and that today’s women, immigrants, and American minorities in the workforce wished to be “themselves.” Also, employers must adjust their standards and practices to the cultural identities of their workers, and not the other way around.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Military of Yesterday and Today**

We are no longer our fathers’ military. In 1977, the airman, sailor, soldier, or Marine was a young, single, white male without a high school diploma. Whereas today’s military man or woman is older, better educated, multicultural, and married.<sup>10</sup>

### **Older and More Experienced**

From 1977 to 1997 the average age of an enlisted person jumped from 24.9 to 27.4 years old. The average months of military experience has also seen a dramatic increase. In 1977, the average military member had 66.5 months of service; in 1997 the average jumped to 89.2 months. By combining the two you will see that the average military member is older and more experienced than he or she was twenty years ago.<sup>11</sup>

With age and experience often comes maturity. The more mature military member’s ability to do more with less has allowed the military to successfully drawdown its numbers to where they are today. These sailors, soldiers and airmen are better able to take on the responsibility that had, in the past, been held by the much more senior ranks a generation ago. In essence the responsibility of leadership has been shifted to lower paygrades because of their increased maturity level. To explain this concept simply, a task that required two E-4s with four years of experience each and an E-6 supervising can be done with a mature E-5 with six years of experience supervising himself.

## **The Military has a Family**

Being that marital status is an element of, it is important to point out that the number of married military personnel has increased by nearly seven percent from 1977 to 1997. The increases are most dramatic in the Navy and Marine Corps.<sup>12</sup> Leaders of today must concern themselves with more than just the personnel under their charge but also with the families of those personnel.

The military family has created a whole new challenge for today's leaders. The smaller force has resulted in increased OPTEMPO and for sailors more time stationed aboard ship. Six months prior to a WESTPAC cruise a sailor will spend 50 percent of the time at sea doing "work-ups" then follow that with the six-month deployment. This works out to being away from the family for three-quarters of the year in which a sailor is on deployment. This absence from home places great stresses on the family particularly on the spouse that is left behind.

Military members today are marrying younger, which means they are divorcing younger.<sup>13</sup> In the Navy there are incentives to be married. A junior enlisted sailor is required to live on ship unless he is married, has children or is willing to pay for his living accommodations sans basic allowance for housing.<sup>14</sup> What is created in the end by the marriage-baby-divorce line is a leadership and scheduling challenge for the supervisor.

This dynamic of the single parent has created a new challenge for today's military leaders. They must contend with the daycare, deployment issue and daily scheduling of the single parent. With that said, raising a child is an awesome responsibility compounded when having to do it alone. Often these young people learn responsibility and independence that translates easily to benefits for the military. If a young man or woman can be successful in raising a family alone he or she most certainly can use those skills in supervising junior personnel.



## **A Better Educated Force**

Today's military is not only better educated as compared to that of 20 years ago but also compared to the civilian population of today. In 1977, 71.5 percent of new recruits had earned high school diplomas compared to 93.8 percent in 1997. This is a substantial increase when compared to the civilian population that actually declined from 79.1 percent in 1977 to 78.7 percent in 1997.<sup>15</sup> Military members today are also continuing education once they are on active duty. In 1996 active duty personnel were enrolled in over 600,000 graduate and undergraduate courses.<sup>16</sup> This increase in education has not come without its problems and challenges to military leadership. Like all elements of diversity educational achievement offers some unique challenges to military leadership from balancing the fine line between confidence and disrespect to keeping highly educated troops motivated to stay in the services.

Armed with more education, today's active duty member is more confident in his abilities and knowledge. This confidence has raised some leadership challenges for division officers and supervisors. The confident soldier of today is more likely to question orders and show disrespect for those of superior rank. Leadership will have to learn how to deal with this challenge to their authority and make it something positive.

Another challenge concerning education is its relation to retention. Unfortunately the military does not pay some of its enlisted folks very well as compared to the civilian world. Many of the more technical specialties in the military require extensive and valuable training, which the services are willing to provide. The problem lies in that civilian companies are willing to pay more for those individuals receiving the training than the military is allowed to pay. Lower pay and deployments do not stack up well against higher pay and a stable home life.

## **More Women in the Military**

This is not our father's military anymore; it is our mother's and sister's as well. In 1977, only 5.8 percent of the military was female compared to 13.7 percent in 1997.<sup>17</sup> This increase in the number of women in the military offers new challenges to leadership, but are not so different from those faced by the civilian business world.

The military and the private sector share problems like sexual harassment, dual working couples, and single parenting. Many of the older senior enlisted sailors grew up in a Navy that was predominately male, particularly while stationed on a ship. The days of "talking like a sailor" are gone forever and in some instances so are one-on-one counseling sessions. The fear of being accused of sexual harassment has forced many male Chiefs and Division Officers to have another senior female in the room during counseling to remove any perception of impropriety. This is not to say that the female subordinate-male supervisor relationships aren't as effective as male-male relationships, but it is one more issue that supervisors of both sexes need to account for.

## **A More Racially Diverse Force**

There are now more black and Hispanic enlisted and officer personnel than there were a generation ago. In 1977, 17.8 percent of the military force was African American as compared to 10.6 percent of all adults in America ages 18-44. By 1997, this number increased to 22.1 percent of the military and 12 percent of the civilian world.<sup>18</sup> The Hispanic representation in the military is not as substantial as compared to the civilian population, however an increase from 3.5 percent in 1977 to 7.5 percent in 1997 is noteworthy.<sup>19</sup> The military sees this as a very positive move toward diversity. It has actually alleviated many of the problems that our father's military had to deal with but has also created some new ones.

The author believes sailors, soldiers, airman, and Marines of today are much more racially tolerant than those of a generation ago. The years of the equal rights movement and desegregation have paid dividends in terms of educating the common man on the differences and similarities between races. As a nation we are not finished with the educational process much has been done to eliminate the fear of people who are different. The progress made in racial tolerance over the last twenty years in the civilian world was not lost in the military. Perhaps due to the close working quarters on ships in airplanes or in tents; or perhaps due to the very dangerous nature of the work being done made each man and woman more dependent on each other and thus more tolerant and accepting of each other.

The more racially diverse force has also created challenges for our military leaders that can not be overlooked. The military is no longer made up of prototypical airmen, sailors, and soldiers; it is made up of individuals varied ethnically and culturally. Therefore, leaders of today must learn how to motivate on an individual level. What works for one may not work for all. Some people are motivated by a “kick in the pants,” some by encouragement, and some by reward. Today’s racially diverse active duty members have a variety of life experiences, skills, and knowledge to offer and it is incumbent on the leaders to figure out how to harness these assets.

### **Religious Diversity**

Although there has been no major change in the religious preferences of the active duty troops over the last 20 years, it is important to note that the armed forces is a religiously diverse group. In 1998, the armed forces totaled 1.41 million people; Table 1 shows the break down of religious preferences in the military.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 1. Religious Preferences in the Military**

<i>Catholic</i>	<i>330,703</i>
<i>No Religious Preference</i>	<i>283,836</i>
<i>Other Baptist</i>	<i>252,855</i>
<i>Christian, no Denominational Preference</i>	<i>96,259</i>
<i>Preference Unknown</i>	<i>85,072</i>
<i>Protestant, no Denominational Preference</i>	<i>62,063</i>
<i>Lutheran</i>	<i>43,056</i>
<i>Methodist</i>	<i>40,953</i>
<i>Southern Baptist Convention</i>	<i>25,833</i>

The religious preferences listed above represent those listed most often. Many other religions are represented in the military, such as Mormon, Judaism, Muslim, Buddhism, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian not to mention many lesser known religions and atheism.<sup>21</sup> Leaders need to respect the religious preferences of their troops in being sensitive to the observance of holy days and special meals in the galleys and mess halls on ships and bases. It all comes down to equality and fair treatment perceived by those whose religious preferences are outside the norm of Christianity. The Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine, USS James Madison (SSBN-627) Blue would prepare special or traditional meals while on deployment in celebration of varying religious holidays. This not only allowed the individual to celebrate their religious holiday in a traditional manner, but also provided a sample of that culture to the rest of the crew.

Managing all of these aspects of diversity can provide long-term benefits to the organization, many of these will be discussed in the next section.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Loden and Judy B Rosener. *Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource*, (Homewood: Business One Irwin, 1991), xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick R. Lynch. *The Diversity Machine*, (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>10</sup> Jack Weible. "The New Military." *Air Force Times*, no. 49 (July, 13 1998), 12.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 15.

## **Part 3**

### **The Benefits of Diversity**

*Our nation's security and prosperity depend on our ability to develop and employ the talents of our diverse population. Equal opportunity is not just the right thing to do; it is also a military and economic necessity.*

— Les Aspin  
Secretary of Defense, 1994

Making the commitment to harness the power that diversity brings to an organization will provide long-term benefits to both the organization and its people. A diverse workforce provides the synergy necessary to create benefits and outcomes that would be greater than those benefits that could be achieved by a homogenous workforce. Is “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts?” What if all the parts are the same is the whole still greater? Synergy is all about taking different parts and putting them together to create something greater than could be created alone.

### **Value Diversity or Not**

Research has shown that civilian companies that have instituted diversity awareness programs and are perceived by the workforce as valuing diversity have realized some long-term advantages over those who have not. The next two sections highlight the advantages the diversity valuing companies have gained.

#### **Long-term Advantages of Valuing a Diverse Workforce**

- The full utilization of the organization's human capital.

- Reduced interpersonal conflict among **others** as respect for diversity increases.
- Enhanced work relationships based on mutual respect and increased employee knowledge of multicultural issues.
- A shared organizational vision and increased commitment among diverse employees at all organizational levels and across all functions.
- Greater innovation and flexibility as **others** participate more fully in key decision-making and problem-solving groups.
- Improved productivity as more employee effort is directed at accomplishing tasks and less energy is spent managing interpersonal conflicts and culture clash.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Problems with “Business as Usual”**

- High turnover among **others** as many employees opt out in search of a more supportive work environment.
- Low morale among those who remain due to persistent culture clash and on-going conflicts between many mainstream employees and **others**.
- Limited innovation due to over-reliance on “tried and true” methods and the underutilization of the skills and perspectives of **others**.
- Lagging productivity as mainstream employees and **others** remain locked in intergroup conflicts that impede their ability to work together and impair their effectiveness in dealing with diverse customers.
- Growing inability to recruit the best and the brightest new workers as the organization’s divisive image and reputation precede it into the employment market place.<sup>2</sup>

## **Translating the Benefits of Diversity to the Military**

The long-term advantages identified at the beginning of this chapter can be easily translated to the military. This section will attempt to look at some of these benefits and show how the military has benefited or can benefit.

### **Utilization of Human Capital**

A person's training, background, personality, motivation and all of their personal experiences make up what is referred to as "human capital"<sup>3</sup>. The military has made great investments in human capital by providing extensive and valuable training to its sailors, soldiers and airmen which the civilian business world finds desirable. The technical training required for operating and maintaining weapon systems, communication systems, and platforms could reap the recipients of such training great financial rewards outside the military. The Navy sends its nuclear machinist mates and nuclear engineers to one-to-two years of intensive technical training before they ever get to the fleet. All of the services send people to become Certified Network Engineers (CNE) to manage their Internets and Intranets and computer networks. Certified Network Engineer training can cost the military upwards of ten thousand dollars as well as lost time of the military member away from his or her regular job while attending school.

However, these sailors, soldiers and airmen have much more to offer than just training. If there was just a single homogeneous military member, the armed forces would have been doomed for failure during the drawdown of the early 1990s. The serviceman's individuality is a source of innovation, creativity and imagination. Ideas come from individuals, which are borne from experience, socio/economic background, and family and cultural influences. It was these bundles of personal histories that have allowed the United States Armed Forces to continue to function as the premier military in the world despite the dramatic cutbacks in the last ten years.



### **Reduced Interpersonal Conflict**

Making a cultural change to respect the diversity of the military workforce will lead to reduced conflict among people or groups of differing cultural backgrounds. It is sad but true that as a society we make assumptions about people based on the color of one's skin or the way a person chooses to worship or not worship God. Building a sensitivity to or understanding these things will help eliminate stereotypes and reduce the conflicts caused by a lack of understanding of individuals.

### **Enhanced Work Relationships**

Enhancing working relationships based on respect and understanding of multicultural issues is the logical extension of reducing interpersonal conflict. Service members are required to work in close quarters, particularly in the Navy aboard ships. Working in such close proximity to one another can exacerbate interpersonal conflict and destroy working relationships. Fostering awareness and increasing knowledge of multicultural issues will help increase respect for one another and improve working relationships.

The military is one of the few occupations where the employee is asked to place his life in the hands of a co-worker. Trust is key to survival in battle. The soldier must trust that the man fighting next to him is capable and willing to do his job in the heat of the fight. Strong working relationships build the trust necessary for success in battle.

### **Greater Innovation and Flexibility**

As mentioned earlier in "Utilizing of Human Capital" all the things that make a person an individual give him or her creativity and imagination. Change is a reality in today's military. The question is do we want full participation from the service member in deciding the direction of that change? Embracing the military's diverse workforce will provide a level of comfort to its

service men and women, which will give them the confidence to make recommendations for change. Creating an environment in which the lowest ranking airmen or seamen is respected and feels the freedom to participate in the decision-making process be it as a part of a team or the commanding officer's suggestion box is paramount to constructive change.

### **Improved Productivity**

Poor working relationships and interpersonal conflict brought on by cultural clashes sap productivity. If the service member is expending energy on confrontation with a shipmate then he or she is expending less energy or time on the work at hand. The confrontations between the two causes waste in managerial time as well. Senior enlisted supervisors and Division Officers spend a great deal of time managing and resolving these conflicts. This is time better spent managing the workload. Reduced interpersonal conflict enhances working relationships and leads to improved productivity. With solid working relationships the division, department or squadron can concentrate on the work at hand.

### **Reduced Employee Turnover**

The reduction in military forces coupled with the increase in OPTEMPO, it is imperative that the military keep its top performers. Every time one of the highly trained military members leaves the service, a loss in human capital is realized. Because the military by and large does not compete well with the civilian business world with regard to monetary reward it must have more to offer than money to garner the benefits of the investment in human capital made early on in the careers of its workforce. Men and women of the military stay in because of the intangibles of the job. Pride in serving one's country, being valued for individual contribution, and being respected for who they are and what they can do is why service men and women reenlist. A non-supportive work environment where the cultural differences are not respected fosters high

turnover particularly among highly trained quality people. The quality service members after receiving thousands of dollars worth of technical training have unlimited civilian employment options. The only hope of keeping these people is to provide a respectful and supportive work environment.

### **Improved Recruiting Opportunities**

In recruiting, reputation is everything. Over the last 20 years the U. S. Armed Forces has become representative of society with regard to race. As the military's reputation for being a culturally diverse organization and one that is respectful of that diversity grows it will become easier to attract top-notch recruits.<sup>4</sup>

The next section will discuss some of the pitfalls or difficulties in managing diversity.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Loden and Judy B Rosener. *Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource*, (Homewood: Business One Irwin, 1991), 220

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Weible. "The New Military." *Air Force Times*, no. 49 (July, 13 1998), 13.

## **Part 4**

### **Pitfalls of Diversity**

*Affirmative action is a work force issue; managing diversity is a competitive issue. It's a competitive issue and a business issue because it touches both customers and employees.*

— Wayne E. Heiden  
*CEO Allstate Insurance Company*

This section will deal with some of the problems and misperceptions encountered with managing diversity. First, to truly embrace and value diversity in the workforce quite often requires an organizational cultural change. Second, a line must be drawn between affirmative action and diversity.

### **Cultural Change**

The very thing that makes diversity in the workforce an asset makes it a liability as well. Diversity derives its strength from the varying cultural backgrounds and histories of the workforce. People are born and raised to think a certain way and it is a very difficult task to change that way of thinking, be it ethnic, gender, or religious bias. Just as people have a culture so do organizations. Organizational culture can be defined as:

A pattern of basic assumptions-invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems or external adaptation and internal integration-that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, organizational culture is “normal behavior” within an organization, evolved over time and taught to new employees.

There is no tried and true method of changing organizational culture; it is a difficult and time-consuming process that may take years to accomplish. As a nation the United States has made great strides in racial tolerance in the last 40 years, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1965, but keep in mind 40 years is a long time and we still have a ways to go. Part 5 of this document presents recommendations on what can be done within the military to assist in the process of change.

### **Not Just Another Affirmative Action Program**

Many of those who do not understand what diversity is and how it translates to organizational advantage look at it as another affirmative action program designed to discriminate against the white male. Affirmative action is essentially “proportional representation for women and minorities.”<sup>2</sup> What this means is that women and minority representation in the workforce should be proportional with that of the community or society. The military does not have an affirmative action program; what it has is a highly diverse organization that because of its diversity acts as a force multiplier with regard to innovation and creativity.

Affirmative action and diversity management is an apples to oranges comparison. As mentioned affirmative action is forced proportionality and managing diversity is taking full advantage of the myriad of cultures, backgrounds and histories of the sailors, soldiers and airmen. Diversity management in the military is not a quota system, the military’s all volunteer force has on its own generated racial, ethnic and religious proportional representation. In fact, in the one area where the military is not representative-women in the service-for a variety of

reasons not germane to this paper there has been no overt recruitment effort to right that disparity.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Edward H Schein. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, (San Francisco: Josey-Bass Publishers), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick R. Lynch. *The Diversity Machine*, (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 12.

## **Part 5**

### **Recommendations**

*Having people present with different backgrounds and traditions bring fresh, new, creative solutions to the table.*

— CDR Dan Dolgrin  
*United States Navy Psychologist and Author*

Have the Armed Forces done all that needs to be done in creating a military that is representative of the country it defends and have they taken full advantage of what its work force can offer?

#### **The Need for Further Diversity**

The Armed Forces has made tremendous strides in the last twenty years. Part 2 of this paper showed that the military as a whole is fairly representative of the United States particularly in the enlisted ranks. A couple of areas in which the military falls short of the national level are minority representation in the officer ranks and women. With regard to minority representation in the officer ranks, quotas to achieve proportionate levels is certainly not recommended. The author of this paper believes selection to any program should be based solely on qualification, the best person for the job and not the right number for the job. However, efforts need to be made in that equal recruitment opportunities are offered to minorities. Being that the military is an all-volunteer force, the face of the military that is presented to potential recruits must be shown in a way that each minority group can relate to. There is more to it, however, than just

showing representation. There must also be equality in advancement opportunities for all military members for prospective recruits to consider the military as a career. It is recommended that recruitment advertisement concentrate on multicultural opportunities in the Armed Forces as well as making proportional contact among all groups of people.

## **Managing Diversity**

To reap the benefits of diversity, the Armed Forces must learn how to manage diversity. It is a given that a person's behavior is driven by his or her perceptions of reality. If a sailor, soldier or airmen believes there is an opportunity for recognition or advancement performance will reflect that. A study of police officers, brokerage clerks, and public school teachers in 1990 found that their perception's of being valued by the organization significantly effected their conscientiousness, job involvement, and innovativeness.<sup>1</sup> Stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and prejudice cause minority groups to feel less valued, and with the military being so culturally diverse, managing the dynamics of diversity could have significant implication for innovation.<sup>2</sup>

Sensitivity to diversity is not a new revelation for the military. The Navy and the Army attempted diversity awareness in the 1960s and 1970s. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt tried to turn the Navy's attention to diversity using the Human Goals Program (HGP). Human Goals Program strove to sensitize sailors to the differences between people, particularly concerning race. It relied on ad hoc learning collectives to raise the basic issues of discrimination and the distance between blacks and whites. The prime vehicle for raising awareness was sensitivity training presided over by a trained facilitator. The idea was to solicit an upward flow of communication from the sailors using "Zumwalt Grams" or "Z-Grams," which is essentially a Navy-wide suggestion box. The program bypassed middle leadership and thus failed for lack of support.<sup>3</sup> The Army had the Organizational Effectiveness (OE) Model; the focus here was certainly



managerial, but the “presenting symptoms” included many related to diversity e.g. race, gender and so on. Organizational Effectiveness Model’s focus was to increase the tolerance for diversity and to capture the synergy associated with it. Similar to the Navy program, OE relied on trained facilitators to deliver the message. Also like the Navy program it achieved early success and “ran out of gas.”<sup>4</sup>

The intentions of both the Navy and Army programs were honorable, but simply lacked support from mid-level leadership in the Navy and senior-level leadership in the Army. In the early 1990s Armed Forces personnel were bombarded with sexual harassment training to raise the awareness and understanding of a very important problem that was giving the military a “black eye.” By most accounts the effort has been a success. The same type of intensity is required with regard to “diversity awareness.” The idea is not to become color blind or colorless, but to see these differences and embrace them as an opportunity for growth and innovation. Table 2 highlights the dimensions of diversity training that should begin in boot camp and continue throughout one’s career on an annual basis to reinforce and reeducate.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2. Diversity Training**

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Locus of Training</b>
Facts and stereotypes about diverse subpopulations or individuals	An Audience
Exploring personal attitudes and values related to diversity issues	Interacting individuals, as in role-plays
Equal Opportunity	An Audience
Exploring how differences can breed creativity	An Audience

It is important to remember that a person is a product of his experiences and culture, and stereotypes and misperceptions are a product of ignorance. A person’s long-held belief with

regard to stereotypes and misperceptions is difficult to change, but not so difficult that they shouldn't be provided the opportunity to do so. The advantages of understanding and valuing diversity are too great to ignore. Once sensitivity to the differences between people is realized, concentration on ensuring that each service member feels that he or she is respected as an individual can begin.

The key to managing diversity is commitment. With the full support of all levels of leadership, from the O-10s to the E-1s, cultural change is possible. As mentioned earlier there is no simple way to make a cultural change, it requires setting clear and specific goals, ensuring commitment at all levels, breaking from past practices, and most of all communicating the desire for change throughout the military.<sup>6</sup> Leadership must “walk the talk” for success.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Taylor Cox, JR. *Cultural Diversity in Organizations*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1994), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>3</sup> Robert T. Golembiewski. *Managing Diversity in Organizations*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>6</sup> David Drennan. *Transforming Company Culture*, (London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1992), 207.

## Part 6

### Conclusion

*Having different people in the Navy is very helpful, because you can use some things people say to you to help yourself. Somebody might say that when I was growing up, I used to do it this way and it worked. Then you go and try it and find it is kind of easy doing it the way your friend did.*

— Lawrence Burns  
*Boatswains Mate 2<sup>nd</sup> Class United States Navy*

Boatswains Mate 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Lawrence Burns hit the proverbial nail on the head. Twenty years ago there was little need to understand or care about effective ways of dealing with diversity, and perhaps, that is why early efforts failed. The young, single, white, uneducated, military man is a thing of the past. The troops of the new millenium are a culturally diverse group of technically proficient men and women in high demand in the civilian business world. To take full advantage of their diversity, the military must embrace it and understand how to get the most out of it.

Steps must be taken to ensure the benefits of diversity are not lost to ignorance and apathy. Recruiting efforts must be focused towards ensuring we keep our current mix of ethnic and cultural diversity and extensive training needs to be done in boot camp and incorporated into every annual training plan as was done with sexual harassment. Just as harassment will not be tolerated nor should ignorance of the value each sailor, soldier and airmen. The key ingredient to embracing diversity is top-down commitment to creating an environment where the differences

between people are used to generate creative and innovative solutions to the problems that face the Armed Forces of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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